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Dear Josh & Esther:

Earlier this week I attended the first meeting of the Committee on the Biochem. Department of the Stanford Medical School. The Committee was complete: Terman, the provost, as chairman; Chandler, Cutting, and Leetschen from the Med. School; Steere to represent Biology; Wendell Stanley for biochem.; and Noller from the Chem. Department at Stanford. As you know, I am "Consultant" to the Committee.

Terman, Steere, Noller, and I drove up together from Stanford to San Francisco. On the way up Terman was trying to make plans for the meeting, and told us that he thought this first meeting should be concerned with discussing what "fields" in Biochem. could be recognized, and what the relative advantages and disadvantages would be of "clinical", "physico-chemical", "protein", "metabolism", etc. kinds of biochem., thus laying the foundation for a future meeting at which the names of people representing the various areas, or, better yet, the area decided upon (if we'd get that far!) with their qualifications could be proposed and discussed.

From this introduction I feared that not much would be accomplished, and that there would be quite a difference of opinion as to what would seem the most desirable solution of the problem.

But the result was quite otherwise. Within a half hour there was no further point in talking about "fields", because every one was of the same opinion: Stanford should try to get the best general biochemist in the U.S., and decidedly not a clinically inclined man or a specialist, as head of the new department.

Thereafter we proceeded to mention names and pick out, tentatively, a " slate". Also this was accomplished before the meeting broke up around 6 pm. I must say that I am VERY pleased with what has emerged. One of the truly helpful aspects was the presence of

Stanley: it was the second time I've been on a Committee with him, and on both occasions I have been most pleasantly surprised at his attitude. In this instance he was especially useful not as a Nobel laureate in the first place, but as the man who had in his possession a large dossier on the most outstanding general biochemists in the US, a result of the fact that the Univ. of Calif. not long ago was also facing the problem of selecting a head of its Biochem. Dept.

The names of the top 4 or 5 possible candidates will now be submitted to other members of the Med. School and of the Biol. Dept., and I suppose that in another few weeks the Committee will meet again to determine what to do next.

For many years I have not been so optimistic about Stanford's future developments. And I thought I'd mention these events to you because they might conceivably have a bearing on your own plans and decisions.

Many thanks for the reprints, Josh!

And very best wishes and regards to both of you.

As ever,
Kees.